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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [SOCI](#) [SCUL](#) [ECON](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: BAGHDAD EPRT: OMAR AL-JABOORI OUTLINES SUNNI
PRIORITIES IN BAGHDAD

REF: A. BAGHDAD 2670
[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 3013
[1](#)C. BAGHDAD 3710
[1](#)D. BAGHDAD 3711

Classified By: E-PRT Leader Eric Whitaker, Reason: Section 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) This is a Baghdad 2 Brigade E-PRT reporting cable.

[1](#)2. (C) Summary: Sheikh Omar Al-Jaboori, Human Rights Advisor to Vice President Tariq Al-Hashimi, told the E-PRT October 9 that the priorities for Sunnis in Baghdad are to re-open mosques and activate the Iraqi Security Volunteer (ISV) program on the east side of the Tigris River; develop a media plan to encourage displaced persons to return home; curb the capabilities of Jaysh Al-Mahdi (JAM); and persuade the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) to combat JAM. Dr. Kheder Shukur, assistant to Al-Jaboori, reported an improved security situation, as evidenced by a decrease in militia activity, Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) attacks, displacement, kidnapping, murders, detentions, and collusion of the Iraqi Security Forces with militias. Nonetheless, he said, 40 percent of Sunni mosques remain closed and the return of displaced persons to their homes has progressed slowly. Al-Jaboori and Shukur also reported, as part of an on-going E-PRT discussion with Sunni leaders about reconciliation in Baghdad (reftels A - D), problems with the Iraqi Security Volunteers program in the Saydiyah neighborhood of Rashid district; the prospect of Shia and Sunnis fighting AQI and JAM together; the need for more police in eastern Baghdad; the Sunni role in identifying projects for their communities; a proposal for a reconciliation summit; and the role of E-PRT-supported iftars in reviving Sunni mosques. End summary.

Sunni Priorities and Views on Sadr-ISCI Agreement

[1](#)3. (C) Sheikh Omar Al-Jaboori, Human Rights Advisor to Vice President Tariq Al-Hashimi, told the E-PRT October 9 that the priorities for Sunnis in Baghdad are to re-open mosques and activate the Iraqi Security Volunteer (ISV) program on the east side of the Tigris River; develop a media plan to encourage displaced persons to return home; to curb the capabilities of Jaysh Al-Mahdi (JAM); and to persuade the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) to combat JAM. Both JAM and Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) are "re-strengthening," Al-Jaboori said, and thereby sending a message to U.S. politicians, Coalition Forces (CF), and Sunnis. Sunni-U.S. cooperation is considered a "dangerous subject" among Shia leaders, he claimed. The Sunnis fought AQI with CF help, not that of the GoI, which is nonetheless trying to claim credit for it. Moreover, Al-Jaboori said, the problem is not just Iraqis, but also Iranians.

[1](#)4. (C) Al-Jaboori said that the conflict between the

Sadrists and ISCI was "true and real," for "absolute control on the ground," especially in the south, but also in Baghdad.

The Sadr Movement has murdered many Sistani followers, he claimed, pressuring ISCI to seek a ceasefire agreement with the Sadrists. Sunnis can work with ISCI, Al-Jaboori said, but not the Sadr Movement, which is "too violent." Sunnis would like to establish Sunni-Shia committees in all the mulhallahs of Baghdad, he added.

Improvements in Security Situation

¶5. (C) Dr. Kheder Shukur, assistant to Al-Jaboori, reported a decrease in militia activity, AQI attacks, displacement, kidnapping, murders, detentions, and collusion of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) with militias. Nonetheless, 40 percent of Sunni mosques remain closed and the return of displaced persons to their homes has been slow. In general, the improvements have resulted from CF pressure on militias. On the west side of the Tigris River, he said, the improvements are also due to the ISV program, which Shukur expects will continue. The ISV program is a "foundation for stability" and the number one security effort underway, he said; improving the program is a Sunni priority.

Sunni and Shia Volunteers in Saydiyah Neighborhood

¶6. (C) Shukur claimed that Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki had "frozen" the Iraqi Security Volunteer (ISV) program in the mixed-sect Saydiyah neighborhood of Rashid district after consulting with the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI),

BAGHDAD 00003712 002 OF 003

and that the Prime Minister wanted to "re-inject JAM into the neighborhoods." The Government of Iraq (GoI) is making "a big deal," he said, about placing Shia among Saydiyah's 200 ISV in order to create "balance." Omar Al-Jaboori then warned that ISCI, Sadrists, and JAM are all "busy" in Saydiyah.

¶7. (C) Brigade Combat Team (BCT) Commander said it is important, more generally, to review the ISV program for the east side of the Tigris River. In the comparatively rural, mixed-sect neighborhood of Saydiyah, on the west side, ISVs generally work in the Sunni areas. The east side's urban neighborhoods are different - ISVs serve more often in single-sect neighborhoods than they do in mixed areas.

¶8. (C) The local population was not well integrated into the Saydiyah ISV program, Al-Jaboori explained, citing as an example the recent theft of 51 cars in Saydiyah: after a thorough review, it became clear that many of the Sunni ISVs manning check-points in Saydiyah did not come from the areas in which the check-points were situated. Blended neighborhoods and mulhallahs (sub-neighborhood divisions), Al-Jaboori argued, require more careful rules.

Sunni and Shia Fighting JAM and AQI Together

¶9. (C) Dr. Kheder said the problem of AQI was solved by fighting; JAM should similarly be fought as if they were "criminals." He observed that there is a "great difference in Sunni and Shia psychology," with Sunnis willing to confront problems, but the Shia are unwilling to do so. The Sunni plan is for the Shia to fight JAM, like the Sunni fought AQI in Anbar. BCT Commander noted that many mainstream Shia are tired of extremists, and want to rid themselves of them. Shukur said the Sunnis need to coordinate with the Shia who are ready to confront extremists, and mentioned a Sunni-Shia meeting set to take place the same day in Baghdad's outlying Mada'in qada (rural

district). He added that the ISF still need the help of CF to fight JAM, as the ISF benefit from outside training and weaponry.

Sunnis to Help Find Projects in their Neighborhoods

¶10. (C) Al-Jaboori expressed an interest in Sunnis helping to identify projects within their communities and vouching for qualified contractors. The U.S. had been generous with both funds and lives, he said; it is important, however, to avoid mistakes of the past, wherein money was wasted without pursuing the appropriate goals. Al-Jaboori explained that the "main road" to progress is both military and political, and he hopes E-PRTs will be helpful in establishing relations at the community level. He emphasized the importance of pursuing multiple avenues so that neighborhood and district councils, community leaders, and sheikhs all benefit.

Summit to Address Reconciliation, Empower Moderates

¶11. (C) Al-Jaboori proposed a summit of all tribal leaders, Embassies, GOI, and NGOs to discuss reconciliation. His plan calls for a presentation to recap reconciliation gains) summarizing accomplishments and presenting next steps to the GOI in order to apply pressure for further progress. Al-Jaboori said a series of meetings had already taken place, and that organizers were trying to implement a "check-valve" to prevent back-sliding. He is interested in E-PRT and Brigade assistance in making this forum happen.

¶12. (C) The Sunnis are united, Al-Jaboori said, and are ready to cooperate and accept responsibility for the future. The "cycle of reconciliation is being stopped by the government," he added. One to two years ago the Sunnis were seen as a problem; today, he asserted, the Shia are the problem. Today there is silence from the government about re-taking control of local communities, and silence about fighting AQI; Sunnis have a choice of remaining silent or claiming credit for these accomplishments. Shia moderates are paralyzed by this lack of government leadership, and criminals are hijacking their good will. One helpful approach, he said, will be for government officials to be elected by geographic districts, rather than via party slates, as the "only bloc is one of Shia extremists." In the meantime, Sunnis and Shias should protect each other, Al-Jaboori said. Outside countries influenced AQI, and a partnership is needed to fight it everywhere.

BAGHDAD 00003712 003 OF 003

More Iraqi police Needed in Eastern Baghdad

¶13. (C) The ISV program has no future without leading to sustainable employment, BCT Commander stated. Since there are fewer Iraqi Police (IP) vacancies on the east side, there is less need for the ISV program there. Over time, he said, the IP will need many recruits: 12,600 this year and 45,000 over five years. As unemployment is high, this will help men to secure jobs. In the near term, additional police needs will be 200 in the Palestine Street area, 100 in Zayuna, 300 in 9 Nissan, 50 in Al-Jedida, and 50 in Zafaraniya. The academies are full now and enrollment is limited to 1600 per month, BCT Commander explained, noting that the 800 additional police projected for the east side is currently 30 percent over the authorized level.

We're in the Foxhole Together

¶14. (C) Colonel Bannister expressed his regrets for the

death of Ahmed Muneim, a regular Sunni reconciliation dialogue participant (reftel D). After BCT Commander explained that the Brigade lost a soldier and had 10 wounded in action during the previous week, Al-Jaboori replied that the Brigade lives in the same foxhole with Sunnis in fighting the terrorists, with martyrs on both the Brigade and Sunni sides. He said that these losses provide an incentive to continue our work, so that these losses are not in vain. He added that Sunnis wished to work with the Brigade to convince the GoI to permit amnesty for those of "good will" and without "dirty hands" regarding CF and the Iraqi people. He argued that the Sunnis and Brigade should partner with General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker to push for amnesty provisions; an amnesty will continue to foster cooperation and the right atmosphere across sectarian lines.

Iftars Helped Revive Our Mosques

¶15. (C) Al-Jaboori thanked the E-PRT and Brigade for the financial support they provided for the iftar dinners, explaining that the dinners had "brought life back to the mosques." He added that people had been afraid to meet in public, and that security, financial, and reconciliation efforts in this new, grassroots approach were succeeding. The iftars gave a positive image of Muslims, he said, and the USG is starting to be able to "distinguish between Muslims and terrorists." This improved understanding will reduce the "clash between the civilizations." These events help to break down the barriers between Sunnis and Shia, and redirect attention away from AQI and JAM.
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